



# The Middle East Partnership Initiative

## Fostering Prosperous Societies

***"We seek to support civil society efforts worldwide because we believe that civil society helps to make communities more prosperous and stable. It helps to drive economic growth that benefits the greatest number of people."***

U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton

The sustained development and prosperity of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region depend on national and local governments, domestic firms, private individuals, and enterprises with the tools to create economic growth. The Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) sponsors a series of economic projects that work hand-in-hand with each of these groups to create a framework for sustained growth.

### EXPANDING ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Entrepreneurship is a key vehicle to improve economic conditions and expand job creation and social change in the MENA region. MEPI is committed to fostering economic and social entrepreneurship to unlock innovation, spur private sector development, and create new employment opportunities for the region's young population.

*Supporting Women Entrepreneurs* - The U.S.-Saudi Women's Forum on Social Entrepreneurship enriches the lives of women and their communities through the application of business and leadership skills to social needs, while generating societal and economic value. With Dar al Hekma as the lead Saudi partner, and Babson College and Wellesley College providing the content and academic guidance, ICF International has delivered a break-through program that has empowered a group of 100 female college students to take leadership roles in their communities through social enterprises - a first of its kind in Saudi Arabia. The women have been implementing projects to advocate and raise awareness of recycling, volunteerism, diabetes, disability rights, and discrimination across Jeddah. Through the program, they have learned entrepreneurship skills, how to use online social marketing effectively, and the importance of civic activism. Most importantly, they have used what they have learned to help their communities. For example, when Jeddah was recently hit with devastating floods, these dedicated activists used their newly-acquired skills to organize online campaigns to clean up the city and hold public officials accountable.

*Support for Young Entrepreneurs* - MEPI has invested \$4 million in fiscal years 2009 and 2010 in youth entrepreneurship, including \$1.5 million for its "Generation Entrepreneur Project" which will empower 22,000 young people throughout the Middle East to begin their own entrepreneurial ventures. National and region-wide competitions among student-led businesses will identify one hundred winners to receive \$1,000 each to scale up and continue their work. A reality-TV crew will follow the selected young entrepreneurs to document their challenges and successes. The resulting show will be broadcast regionally.

MEPI is also providing \$1.5 million to finance "Project Liftoff" in Egypt, Libya and Morocco to support emerging high-impact entrepreneurs. These young people will be encouraged to embrace innovation, risk-taking, and further develop their business skills. In Yemen, MEPI projects will reach an estimated 30,000 secondary students and rural youth to promote entrepreneurship with a social and environmental focus, offering young people a brighter future and helping them to become active citizens.



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For more information, visit MEPI at [www.mepi.state.gov](http://www.mepi.state.gov) and our regional offices in Abu Dhabi and Tunis at [www.abudhabi.mepi.state.gov](http://www.abudhabi.mepi.state.gov) and [www.medregion.mepi.state.gov](http://www.medregion.mepi.state.gov).

U.S. Department of State · Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs

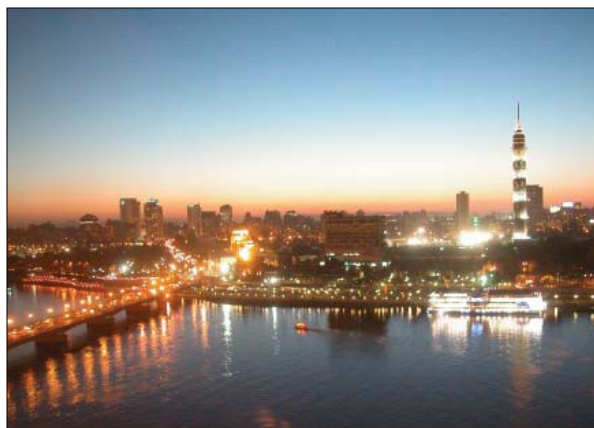


## COMMERCIAL & LEGAL REFORM

Dynamic trade and investment and a robust private sector demand a consistent, transparent, and impartial regulatory framework. Through projects focused on promoting international best practices, MEPI works with governments and private sectors to improve the business investment climate and thus encourage growth throughout the MENA region.

*The Commercial Law Development Program* – Through a partnership with the U.S. Department of Commerce's Commercial Law Development Program (CLDP), MEPI plays a key role in helping to reform the legal framework for commercial activity and maximizing the mutual benefit of U.S. Free Trade Agreements in the region. This work includes: technical assistance with legislative changes; training in international commercial law; reducing technical barriers to trade; and technical assistance with bankruptcy, property rights, collateral, and dispute resolution.

*The Center for International Private Enterprise* – The Center for International Private Enterprise (CIPE) works with governments and the private sector in Bahrain, Tunisia, and Yemen to assist companies in their efforts to adopt international standards of good corporate governance; provide recommendations for related institutional, legal, and judicial reforms; and raise public awareness of the need for better corporate governance.



*The Financial Services Volunteer Corps* – FSVC works with central banks and ministries of finance in Algeria, Morocco, and Yemen to promote macroeconomic stability and growth. Through these peer-to-peer partnerships, FSVC helps countries design growth-oriented fiscal and macroeconomic policies that also promote stability. FSVC conducts training and provides technical assistance to strengthen commercial banking sectors, stimulate the flow of credit and other financial services to small and medium-sized enterprises, and improve the supervision of financial institutions. Sound fiscal management is crucial to the private sector development, investment, and broader growth.

## PROMOTING TRADE & INVESTMENT

MEPI projects help MENA economies connect to the world economy and access the advantages of the international trading system. To this end, MEPI supports the implementation of trade agreements that the U.S. has signed with partners in the region to improve opportunities for bilateral trade and investment. MEPI also supports private sector development to take advantage of broader trade opportunities for small and medium-sized enterprises, which are the engine of employment and economic growth.

*Trade Capacity Building* – With MEPI support, the International Executive Service Corps (IESC) recently completed a project to strengthen the ability of public and private sector stakeholders in selected MENA countries to engage effectively with counterparts regarding issues related to bilateral or multilateral trade policy. IESC and partners Booz Allen Hamilton and the Institute for Trade and Commercial Diplomacy delivered training modules to government officials and business professionals to increase the trading capacity of MENA firms.

